



Senior Living 100 Coronavirus Task Force Executive Summary – Call #4

COVID-19 in Your Community: From Managing an Outbreak to Keeping Residents Engaged
April 6, 2020

Through weekly **Senior Living 100 Coronavirus Task Force** conference calls with top experts and operators on the front lines, we aim to provide you with **best practices in crisis management** and **valuable business-scenario planning**.

This week, operators shared how they are creating COVID-19 free environments, developing unique in-person activities for residents, and managing their dementia populations.

Featured Contributors:

Chris Guay, President & CEO, Vitality Senior Living

Susan Farr, VP Business Development, Ebenezer

Lisa McCormick, Nurse Consultant, Life Care Services

Mike Bingham, SVP Optage & Health Care Initiatives, Presbyterian Homes & Services

Karyn Doherty, Mind and Memory Advocate, Sturges Ridge of Fairfield, a Benchmark Community

Key Learnings:

Overview

This week's call touched upon the importance of dispelling social media inaccuracies to quell staff anxiety; promoting staff appreciation; and creating unique resident engagement activities. A continued theme throughout all four calls has been the critical necessity of communication, education, transparency, heightened infectious control protocols and creative PPE sourcing.

Managing an Outbreak

Most participants are still preparing for an outbreak, however notable learnings include communication (with staff, family); redeployment of staff (i.e. therapists); proactive communication with the state to understand chain of command; maintaining emergency preparedness; high level of infection control; and possible preparation to convert some wings to negative pressure rooms. **Kevin O'Neil, MD** (CMO, Affinity Living Group) is dealing with an outbreak in North Carolina and provided us with the "What-To-Do" cards his [staff](#) and [residents](#) use when symptoms arise.

Creating a COVID-19 Free Environment

Reward employees for staying home if they aren't feeling well. To keep staff out of grocery stores, some communities are ordering baskets of food for their employees or allowing them to order from corporate food service vendors. **David Ellis** (Senior Living 100) highlighted how an outbreak occurred in a Detroit



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SNF through dietary workers and the importance of vigilance with masking kitchen staff (or others with indirect contact). **Chris Guay** (Vitality Senior Living) discussed how they are working with a local Knoxville, TN lab for rapid testing of staff/residents. He also cited an example of how a resident discharged from the hospital stayed in a hotel until the 24-hour test results came back.

Keeping Residents Engaged

Per **Susan Farr** (Ebenezer), communities are getting highly creative with in-person resident engagement (that still complies with social distancing) by hosting activities in hallways, on balconies and in parking lots – which she hopes will transcend COVID-19. Some examples include traveling happy hour, hallway bowling/ karaoke, April Fools party, mask sewing, heart decorations, and a Greatest Movies bracket in lieu of March Madness.

Best Practices/Challenges in Dementia Care

The dementia population is vulnerable and hard to isolate. Several comments emerged about the need for staff to be calm and positive. Use simple terms when communicating with memory care residents about what is happening (i.e. “it’s like a flu outbreak,” “we’re wearing Halloween masks,” “we need to wash our hands often”). Connect memory care residents with their families through FaceTime/Skype and deploy ancillary staff to assist residents on walks and one-on-one activities. **Lisa McCormick** (Life Care Services) discussed the concept of Doorway Dining, which allows residents to eat in the hallways – social dining, not isolation.

Working with Health Systems to Alleviate Capacity Issue

Mike Bingham (Presbyterian Homes & Services) is working with their JV partner Allina Health System to transform a transitional care unit into a COVID-19 cohort site. Emerging challenges with the retrofit include staffing, the uncertainty of if/when there will be a surge, and the high cost. The project is set to be completed April 20.

■ [Senior Living 100 COVID-19 Business Planning & Crisis Management Resources](#)

To receive an invitation to participate in task force calls, please contact:

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